

# T03P04 / Uncovering Politics in Public Policies for Agriculture and Food

**Topic :** T03 / Policy and Politics sponsored by Policy & Politics Journal

**Chair :** Eve Fouilleux (CNRS/CIRAD/University of Montpellier)

**Second Chair :** Jessica Duncan (Wageningen University)

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

*In this panel a selection of papers may be considered for the Policy & Politics journal.*

While policy-making is an inherently political practice, formal and informal governance arrangements that coordinate contemporary policy debates and processes are often organised in ways that have de-politicising effects. In western countries for example, there is evidence of an increasing disconnect between, on the one hand, election-based politics and, on the other hand, public policy decisions, leading to the rise of what The Economist has called “post-truth” politics. More generally, the globalisation of governance has accentuated this disconnection, with debates dominated by experts and technocrats and political decisions taken increasingly further away from the person in-the-street/citizen-voter. The increasing weight of private regulations in contemporary forms of governance adds another dimension to this phenomenon.

These trends are particularly acute in the field of food and agriculture, with a clear tendency towards the internationalization of crucial policy processes, global multi-stakeholder platforms, mushrooming of global private voluntary standards, data-driven indicators with related monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and consensus-based decision-making processes. In different ways, these practices serve to conceal relations of power and the agendas of particular actors in the name of consultation, participation, and democracy. Alongside these broader trends, the dominant logic that has informed agriculture and food policy since the end of the Second World War has come under attack. The green revolution model of agriculture (i.e., the specialisation of agriculture dependent on fossil-fuel based inputs industrialization and uniformisation of consumption habits) has been the dominant approach advanced to grow food and feed people. This model has systematically informed agri-food public policy-making and in return public policies have tended to facilitate its implementation. However, this model has now come under scrutiny worldwide. Critics argue that structural changes to practices, rules, and institutions are needed to ensure a transition towards just and sustainable agri-food systems. To do so requires recognition of the diverse political dynamics that operate across agri-food policy spaces.

Given the context, **this panel proposes to explore the extent to, and the conditions under which, policy processes are being influenced by these critics, and reversely how critics are resisted and neutralised.** More specifically, the panel aims at understanding the diverse ways in which politics are inserted or hidden in agri-food policy spaces, by exploring debates and controversies, their interconnections at various scales of governance, and their (dis)connection to policy-making.

The panel will include papers that focus on the actors that are engaged in policy debates and controversies, the visions they promote, the resources they have to influence the discussions, and how they engage in political struggles and legitimization processes of different models for agriculture and food. Papers will focus on the dynamics of policy debates, including the role of scientists, media coverage, civil society, and the private sector. Papers will interrogate and elucidate spaces where policy decisions are taken, paying attention to practices that either depolitize the inherently political process of public policy-making for food and agriculture, or seek to re-politize public policy-making spaces and debates.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

The objective of the panel is to advance understanding of, and theorization on, the political dimension of public policies (i.e., policy debates, policy-making processes, policy instruments) in the field of agri-food policies, in line with a growing body of literature claiming the emergence of a post-political era.

At a time when more than one billion people are obese and almost another one billion are under-nourished, industrial agri-food systems are increasingly criticized worldwide, for not only their failure to feed people, but also for their significant contribution to increased natural resource scarcity and pollutions, loss of

biodiversity, and a diversity of social problems. Critics argue that structural changes to practices, rules, and institutions are needed to ensure a transition towards just and sustainable agri-food systems. To do so requires recognition of the diverse political dynamics that operate across agri-food policy spaces.

**This panel proposes to explore the extent to, and the conditions under which, policy processes are being influenced by these critics, and reversely how critics are resisted and neutralised.** We aim at understanding the diverse ways in which politics are inserted or hidden in agri-food policy spaces, by exploring debates and controversies, their interconnections at various scales of governance, and their (dis)connection to policy-making. Papers should aim to:

- Identify and analyse ways in which actors insert or mask politics and issues of power into public policy debates and processes;
- Reflect on similarities, differences and interconnections across the practices, tactics and strategies used by actors to politicise policy spaces in a globalized world; and/or,
- Comment and advance theorizing on emerging trends across the debates of food governance and the potential of different categories of actors to envisage alternative scenarios and affect the policy process.

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## Session 1

Thursday, June 29th 13:30 to 15:30 (Block B 5 - 3 )

### Discussants

Jessica Duncan (Wageningen University)

Eve Fouilleux (CNRS/CIRAD/University of Montpellier)

### **The Governance of Food System in sub-Saharan Africa: a preliminary outlook of the G8 New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition**

Haja RAJAONARISON (Center for the Promotion of Interdisciplinary Education and Research, Kyoto University)

Shuji Hisano (Graduate School of Economics, Kyoto University)

### **Background & Research problems:**

In May 2012, The G8 Forum launched the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition (NAFSN) with the idea to bring private investment in African agriculture, and with the aim of improving nutrition and lifting 50 million people out of poverty within the next decades. Many criticisms have been raised by scholars and members of civil society on the *modus operandi* adopted in the NAFSN - tagged as a new form of colonialism transforming social relations and the living conditions of the population in the host countries.

Thus far, the structure, interactions and the ramification of the networks within the NAFSN remains little known and poorly documented. Apart from illustrations by the non-governmental organization ONE [1] and the researchers at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, Robinson and Humphrey [2], which focuses only on the types of projects or amount of investment, there is no extensive research to highlight the complexity of the NAFSN network. The existing research remains very abstract or partially represented to draw well-informed conclusions about the governance mechanism, its interconnections, scale, and its connections with public policy as in the work of McKeon [3], Margulis [4], and Patel et al. [5].

### **Objectives:**

Based on these observations, the objectives of this paper are to give a more tangible preliminary outlook of the NAFSN governance structure and to draw some implications for future research mainly with regards to the space for policy-making and policy debates.

### **Approaches and Methods:**

The paper uses mixed method of analysis stemming from complexity and system theory, a Multi-level network analysis and backward mapping.

### **Significances of the study:**

This paper contributes to the background theory of governance especially with regard to research in the governance networks. As a contribution to the focal theory, it contributes to a better understanding of the system of the NAFSN and thus it will make possible a better theorization and conceptualization of private modes of governance in Africa and beyond. Finally, it also contributes to the data theory which will inform further research on case-oriented studies.

### **References:**

1. ONE. *New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition: Part 1*. 2012 [cited 2017 January 6]; Available from: <https://www.one.org/us/policy/policy-brief-on-the-new-alliance/>.
2. Robinson, E. and J. Humphrey. *How much is the New Alliance doing for food security and nutrition?* 2013

[cited 2016 August 9]; Available from:

<http://www.globalisationanddevelopment.com/2013/06/how-much-is-new-alliance-doing-for-food.html>.

3. McKeon, N., *Food security governance: empowering communities, regulating corporations*. 2015, London; New York: Routledge.

4. Margulis, M.E., *Canada at the G8 and UN Committee on World Food Security: forum-shifting in global food security governance*. Canadian Foreign Policy Journal, 2015. 21(2): p. 164-178.

5. Patel, R., et al., *Cook, eat, man, woman: understanding the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, nutritionism and its alternatives from Malawi*. Journal of Peasant Studies, 2015. 42(1): p. 21-44.

## **Food Sovereignty as a Coalition Magnet**

Puspa Sharma (The Australian National University)

Carsten Daugbjerg (University of Copenhagen)

According to Béland and Cox (2016)[i], some ideas have a political appeal that attract a diversity of individuals and groups, and are used strategically by policy entrepreneurs to frame their interests, mobilise supporters and build coalitions. They call them coalition magnets. The three essential features of a coalition magnet are: i) effective manipulation of the idea by policy entrepreneurs; ii) embracing or promotion of the idea by key actors in the policy process; and iii) capacity of the idea to bring together actors with different perceived interests or policy preferences. Following this notion, this paper argues that food sovereignty can be used as a coalition magnet in food policy making.

A common understanding is that food sovereignty is an idea that ensures agriculture producers'/peasants' rights. The food sovereignty movement, at the transnational level, arose as a challenge to neoliberal models of agriculture and food, and corporatisation of agriculture, which is claimed to have undermined peasant agriculture and sustainability. However, as the literature suggest, food sovereignty is an idea with lots of ambiguities. There are various understandings of what food sovereignty entails. For some, it is a radical departure from existing 'food security' framework, while for the others it means repackaging of existing components of food security in a new way. Nevertheless, a few countries have accepted food sovereignty and are institutionalising it. This raises the question of what purpose the idea of food sovereignty may serve in the food policy process.

In this paper we argue that rather than serving as a policy prescription, food sovereignty has the potential to be used as a coalition magnet bringing together policy actors supporting agricultural reform, but having varying interests or preferences, in a loose coalition. Doing so provides political legitimacy to advance agricultural reform, although policy actors would not necessarily agree on the specific reform measures. We test this argument in a case study of Nepal which has recently instituted food sovereignty as a fundamental right in its Constitution. We do so qualitatively by means of reviewing archival documents, policy documents, interview data, and audio-visual materials.

We find that a few policy entrepreneurs introduced the idea of food sovereignty in Nepal, and others got attracted to it due to its political appeal. That helped build a coalition, which unitedly pushed for institutionalising food sovereignty as a right. But the coalition did not have a common set of distinct policy prescriptions on how to realise that right. A constitutional guarantee on right to food sovereignty has provided parties in the coalition a political/legal platform to advance their agenda of agricultural reforms and peasants' rights according to their policy preferences.

[i] Béland, D & Cox, RH 2016, 'Ideas as coalition magnets: coalition building, policy entrepreneurs, and power relations', Journal of European Public Policy, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 428-45.

## **The politics of agri-food policies: moving beyond the dichotomy of neoliberalism and neomercantilism**

Belesky Paul (International Environment and Development Studies (Noragric), Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU))

Some critical agri-food scholars have argued that public policymaking for food and agriculture is an inherently political process and practice. This paper seeks to contribute to this debate by critically analysing and unpacking the notion of 'apolitical' agri-food policymaking, foregrounding issues of power and ongoing socio-political, economic and ecological contestations that are often rendered invisible by orthodox public policy approaches to food and agricultural policies. This paper compares and contrasts state-led

neomercantilist policies with neoliberal agri-food policies. It also examines alternatives in moving beyond this policy dichotomy. This paper adopts a critical 'relational' approach that incorporates political economy and political ecology perspectives in comprehending the political dimensions of agri-food policies, analytically capturing diverse political dynamics that operate across multiple scales and agri-food policy spaces. This approach renders visible the politics of agri-food policies and the political struggles and legitimization processes of different models for agriculture and food. The discussion and analysis is historically contextualised, recognising a transition from the Washington consensus to a post-Washington divergence in an increasingly multipolar global economy and agri-food system.

## **Follow-up of the Agenda 2030: options for politicizing the review process**

Matheus Zanella (Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS))

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda recreated momentum for broader discussions on sustainable development. In certain topics, for example the Sustainable Development Goals #2 (*end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture*), to achieve its vision would require real transformative change in our current underperforming food systems. However, like many other global visionary initiatives, the 2030 Agenda carries serious risks of becoming ineffective if consistent follow-up mechanism are not set in place. For many, this is exactly the frontier of the sustainable development agenda, that is, how to design effective review processes that will translate a global agreement into societal engagement and actions by different actors and at different scales.

One of the most important review processes refers to how to monitor progress of SDGs' implementation. Monitoring and evaluating progress can be done in a myriad of ways, although the dominant practice has been one of finding suitable data collection techniques that could fit the official indicators list agreed internationally. It is argued that over-emphasizing this official indicator process poses the risk of de-emphasizing the necessary political debates that the Agenda 2030 requires, if real transformative change is envisioned. A better understanding of these political debates would require clarifying the different actors, their interests and visions, and, in particular, the power struggles that are inherent to politics. It is very unlikely that a review process focused only on indicators would sufficiently address these political elements. More innovative review and follow-up mechanisms are necessary to not evade from politics, it is argued.

To develop this argument, evidence is brought from two cases: i) from the national-level: initial actions taken by the Brazilian Government and civil society to implement the Agenda 2030; and ii) from the global-level: methods for organizing thematic reviews. The first case explores the establishment of a National Commission to the SDGs, informal civil society working groups, and independent initiatives by a network of cities, analysing how these initial actions are expecting to increase accountability of 2030 Agenda implementation. The second case discusses more innovative methods for integrated monitoring that will potentially form the basis of global thematic reviews under the auspices of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

We conclude demonstrating how these two examples shows ways of politicizing the review of the Agenda 2030 by giving more clarity to composition of actors and power distribution. This, in turn, could diminish the risk of having an a-political and number-counting SDG follow-up and review.